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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: John F. Blake
Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT: Seminars on Creativity and Ethics

REFERENCE: Memorandum for Multiple Addressees from Acting DCI, dated 25 February 1977, Subject: Recommendations of Seminars on Creativity and Ethics

In answer to your request that we discuss the findings of the seminars which were convened at your direction to consider the subjects of creativity and ethics in the Agency, we have held a series of meetings with each of our Offices to determine:

a. If the recommendations emanating from the seminars applied to this Directorate,

b. If this Directorate's personnel agreed with the findings, and, lastly,

c. If any added insight could be given to the findings.

The comments of the Offices are summarized below insofar as they apply to the six general conclusions listed in your memorandum.

1. Innovative Approaches to Decisionmaking

While the participants in the seminar concluded that more decisionmaking authority should be delegated downward, there were mixed reactions among this Directorate's personnel on this point. Some felt they would like to have more of a say in the hiring, firing, promotion, and assignment of personnel for whom they had some supervisory authority; but, on the other hand, most felt they had all the other authority they needed to carry out their functions. There were some who felt they had the required authorities but were reluctant to exercise them until the boss approved because they involved matters which had keen executive interest. There was, however, almost a unanimous feeling in all the Offices that it was all the constraints on the ability to reprogram funds that had been placed upon them by the Comptroller's office, the Office of Management and Budget and the various Congressional committees that stifled and thwarted new ideas the most. The attitude being, "It's not worth all the time and effort it takes to get the necessary approval and resources, so why even try!" Also, "Even if I receive the initial approval, someone else comes along later and either takes away the monies that were originally allocated or cuts them in half, and I have to go back to the drawing board."

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2. Receptiveness of Management to Innovation

Here the Offices were in general agreement with the findings and recommendations of the seminar. All agreed that financial rewards attained through promotions and achievement awards were nice but not necessarily the real answer. Except for the Office of Personnel, the others felt that the Agency's Suggestion Awards Program is also not the answer. There were some who were of the opinion that the program has been abused by individuals and that the program was administered in an inconsistent manner. No examples were offered, however, to substantiate these beliefs.

Many of the Directorate's employees felt that there should be more face-to-face meetings between senior managers in the Offices and the employees, accompanied by some greater expressions of interest in what the employees, particularly at the lower levels, were doing. They encourage a greater and more widespread use of notes or letters to employees who deserved a special commendation or acknowledgement for a job well done. They felt also that supervisors were quick to criticize for an occasional goof and less inclined to give a pat on the back when the reverse were true. There was some inconsistency here among the persons who were questioned because many felt that the employees were too often not advised of a poor performance until they received their annual fitness reports. Quite a few urged that the fitness report should be used to recognize creativity.

When we turned to the subject of counseling, most persons believed that there should be more of it, especially for the newer and younger employees. Quite frequently, this class of employee is left to fend for himself or herself and tends to become disillusioned and discouraged.

Apropos of this, however, everyone seemed to feel that the grievance procedures in the Directorate were good and well publicized.

3. Improved Personnel Management

One individual echoed the sentiments of several others when he expressed concerns about whether or not his ideas, suggestions and accomplishments were reaching the attention of senior management. Further, he asked, "Is the boss too busy to see what's going on down at my level?" Also, "With all the layers of management that the paperwork has to go through, how can I be assured that you and the DDA are receiving the original version of my idea, or are you receiving a watered-down version signed by either my supervisor or the head of the Office?" Recognition again is a key factor. This feeling or apprehension naturally spills over and could have an impact on creativity and motivation.

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Better communications, more meetings with personnel at all levels should be held. There were a number of persons who attended the recent Division Chiefs Conference and thought that this was a very good means of communicating not only horizontally but also laterally with their counterparts in the other offices. They urged that more of the same take place, perhaps on an annual basis.

More than a few made comments about the "deterioration" of the fitness reports and the fact that there was a great deal of inconsistency in the standards from office to office and even branch to branch. When they learned of the study that is now underway in the Agency, they were pleased. (As an aside, it might be worthwhile to give more widespread publicity to some of the studies that are now underway in the Directorate and the Agency and thereby eliminate the idea that management is just sitting still and doing nothing.)

Several discussions were held about the Directorate's senior rotational program and, generally, the program was received favorably. The Office of Finance had some reservations about it and felt that it could only succeed if it were confined to individuals who had a particular affinity for the skills of the office to which they were assigned. They were assured that this aspect had been carefully considered.

4. Fostering Creativity

When the question of MBO's was discussed, the reaction was mixed and varied depending on how closely the individuals were tied in to the actual process. Those that were tied in closely to the MBO process viewed the opportunity to meet with their senior managers as another way of communicating, and those that were not tied in viewed it as an over-bureaucratized tool that simply created unnecessary work for the middle- and lower-level managers.

As for think tanks, most people felt they were nice if you could afford the time and the manpower to indulge, but, unfortunately, such was not available. They all were too busily engaged in responding to short-deadline requests from the Comptroller's office and other parts of the "seventh floor" which, in many instances, they did not see the need for or were duplicative of information which had been submitted earlier. Once again, the offices pointed to cuts and positions and felt constrained.

When asked if there were ample opportunity for creativity in the Directorate, the answer in almost all cases (except for the reason stated in the preceding paragraph) was yes. The Offices of Communications and Data Processing were two offices where this was especially true. Interestingly enough, one or two persons expressed the opinion that there was more challenge for the genuinely creative person today because of all these constraints than there was back in the good old days.

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5. Liaison Relationships

Not much conversation was spent on this subject inasmuch as it didn't particularly pertain to the Directorate.

6. Ethical Issues

If there were one subject that received a most resounding and emphatic "no" from every one of the eight Offices, it was heard when the possibility of a Canon of Ethics was brought up. Most persons thought that such a happening would be an insult to them and would be courting disaster. The doctors in the Office of Medical Services were especially emphatic on this issue. Furthermore, opined some, they doubted if such a canon could be written and still be meaningful. There were quite a few who felt that creativity and ethics were incompatible as they applied to intelligence. Moreover, it is difficult to perceive how any fixed canons would be enforceable. In sum, everyone, be he or she a doctor, lawyer, computer specialist or communicator, felt that the ethics of one's profession and moral, religious and individual standards were adequate safeguards against wrongdoing and that to go further would inhibit individual creativity and discourage people to a degree where many valuable employees would leave and good prospective employees would pass up the chance to work for us. Good leadership which sets an example for employees at all levels is far more effective than any written canon.

/s/ John F. Blake

John F. Blake

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